

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 231

By McKenzie

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Mark Stephens for his honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Mark Stephens is one such estimable person who evinces the greatest integrity and justice in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stephens began serving as the first District Public Defender for the 6th Judicial District, which encompasses Knox County, when the office was instituted in 1990 and was re-elected by the citizens of the 6th Judicial District to continue serving as their District Public Defender until his retirement in November 2019; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stephens is a native of Indianapolis, Indiana, and a graduate of Broad Ripple High School, class of 1971; he received his undergraduate degree from Culver-Stockton College and his law degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law; and

WHEREAS, recognized as a leader by his peers and colleagues, Mr. Stephens served as the Tennessee District Public Defenders Conference President, Chair of the Tennessee Supreme Court's Indigent Defense Commission, and Chair of the National Association for Public Defense for two years and currently serves on the Steering Committee and Executive Committee of that organization; he has also served eight years as a member of the Board of Directors for Gideon's Promise; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stephens's many professional and civic accomplishments include receiving the Stephen B. Bright Award from Gideon's Promise in recognition of his contribution

to the effort to improve the quality of indigent defense in the South and twice receiving the prestigious Robert W. Ritchie Award from the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for outstanding service on behalf of the organization; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, he was presented with the Law and Liberty Award by the Knoxville Bar Association for his efforts in the advancement and protection of law and liberty; in 2002, he was presented with the University of Tennessee Pro Bono award for outstanding contributions to the Innocence Project; in 2016, he was awarded the Governor's Award by the Knoxville Bar Association for his work in developing the Community Law Office; in 2017, he was selected to become a Fellow of the Knoxville Bar Foundation and was named the Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Member by the University of Tennessee College of Law; and in 2019, he was selected to become a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; and

WHEREAS, while serving as the 6th Judicial District Public Defender for the Knoxville Community Law Office, Mr. Stephens received numerous awards for the Community Law Office's work, including the 2019 Rotary Peace Award from the Rotary Club of Knoxville and the Law Office Accomplishment Award from the American Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stephens enjoys playing golf and promoting his nonprofit, The Justice Initiative, whose mission is to advance a fair and just process for indigent individuals impacted by the justice system through system building, research and evaluation, community outreach, education, and legal advocacy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stephens is most grateful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, Lynette, and their daughters, Jessica, Elizabeth, and Madeline; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Mark Stephens demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of members of the bar and bench and his community alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Mark Stephens for his honorable and astute service to the good people of the State of Tennessee as the District Public Defender for the 6th Judicial District of the Tennessee District Public Defenders Conference and salute his unwavering commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.